

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan and President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan

May 6, 2009

Good afternoon, everybody. We just finished an important trilateral meeting among the United States, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. And earlier today I was pleased to have wide-ranging bilateral discussions with both President Karzai of Afghanistan and President Zardari of Pakistan.

We meet today as three sovereign nations joined by a common goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and its extremist allies in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their ability to operate in either country in the future. And to achieve that goal, we must deny them the space to threaten the Pakistani, Afghan, or American people. And we must also advance security and opportunity, so that Pakistanis and Afghans can pursue the promise of a better life.

And just over a month ago, I announced a new strategy to achieve these objectives after consultation with Pakistan, Afghanistan, and our other friends and allies. Our strategy reflects a fundamental truth: The security of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the United States are linked. In the weeks that have followed, that truth has only been reinforced. Al Qaida and its allies have taken more lives in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and have continued to challenge the democratically elected Governments of the two Presidents standing here today. Meanwhile, Al Qaida plots against the American people—and people around the world—from their safe haven along the border.

I'm pleased that these two men, elected leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan, fully appreciate the seriousness of the threat that we face, and have reaffirmed their commitment to confronting it. And I'm pleased that we have advanced unprecedented cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan on a bilateral basis—and among Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States—which will benefit all of our people.

Today's meeting is the second in the trilateral dialogs among our countries, and these meetings will coordinate our efforts in a broad range of areas, across all levels of government. To give you a sense of the scope of this effort, Secretary Clinton, Attorney General Holder, Secretary

Vilsack, Director Panetta, Director Mueller, and Deputy Secretary Lew will all host separate meetings with their Pakistani and Afghan counterparts. And these trilateral meetings build on efforts being made in the region and in the United States, and they will continue on a regular basis.

Now there's much to be done. Along the border where insurgents often move freely, we must work together with a renewed sense of partnership to share intelligence, and to coordinate our efforts to isolate, target, and take out our common enemy. But we must also meet the threat of extremism with a positive program of growth and opportunity. And that's why my administration is working with Members of Congress to create opportunity zones to spark development. That's why I'm proud that we've helped advance negotiations towards landmark transit-trade agreements to open Afghanistan and Pakistan borders to more commerce.

Within Afghanistan, we must help grow the economy, while developing alternatives to the drug trade by tapping the resilience and the ingenuity of the Afghan people. We must support free and open national elections later this fall, while helping to protect the hard-earned rights of all Afghans. And we must support the capacity of local governments, and stand up to corruption that blocks progress. I also made it clear that the United States will work with our Afghan and international partners to make every effort to avoid civilian casualties as we help the Afghan Government combat our common enemy.

And within Pakistan, we must provide lasting support to democratic institutions, while helping the Government confront the insurgents who are the single greatest threat to the Pakistani state. And we must do more than stand against those who would destroy Pakistan; we must stand with those who want to build Pakistan. And that is why I've asked Congress for sustained funding, to build schools and roads and hospitals. I want the Pakistani people to understand that America is not simply against

terrorism, we are on the side of their hopes and their aspirations, because we know that the future of Pakistan must be determined by the talent, innovation, and intelligence of its people.

I have long said that we cannot meet these challenges in isolation, nor delay the action, nor deny the resources necessary to get the job done. And that's why we have a comprehensive strategy for the region, with civilian and military components, led by Ambassador Richard Holbrooke and General David Petraeus. And for the first time, this strategy will be matched by the resources that it demands.

U.S. troops are serving courageously and capably, in a vital mission in Afghanistan, alongside our Afghan and international partners. But to combat an enemy that is on the offensive, we need more troops, training, and assistance. And that's why we are deploying 21,000 troops to Afghanistan, and increasing our efforts to train Afghan security forces. And I'm also pleased that our NATO allies and partners are providing resources to support our strategy. And that is why we are helping Pakistan combat the insurgency within its borders, including \$400 million in immediate assistance that we are seeking from Congress, which will help the Government as it steps up its efforts against the extremists.

And to advance security, opportunity, and justice for the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan, we are dramatically increasing our civilian support for both countries. We were pleased that these efforts were recently amplified through the \$5.5 billion that was pledged for Pakistan at an international donors conference in Tokyo; resources that will help meet the basic needs of the Pakistani people.

The road ahead will be difficult. There will be more violence, and there will be setbacks. But let me be clear: The United States has made a lasting commitment to defeat Al Qaida, but also, to support the democratically elected sovereign Governments of both Paki-

stan and Afghanistan. That commitment will not waiver, and that support will be sustained.

Every day, we see evidence of the future that Al Qaida and its allies offer. It's a future filled with violence and despair. It's a future without opportunity or hope. That's not what the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan want, and it's not what they deserve. The United States has a stake in the future of these two countries. We have learned, time and again, that our security is shared. It is a lesson that we learned most painfully on 9/11, and it is a lesson that we will not forget.

So we are here today in the midst of a great challenge. But no matter what happens, we will not be deterred. The aspirations of all our people—for security, for opportunity, and for justice—are far more powerful than any enemy. Those are the hopes that we hold in common for all of our children. So we will sustain our cooperation. And we will work for the day when our nations are linked, not by a common enemy, but by a shared peace and prosperity, mutual interests and mutual respect, not only among governments, but among our people.

I want to thank President Zardari and President Karzai for joining me here today. I look forward to continuing this close cooperation between our Governments in the months and years ahead. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:11 p.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.; Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack; Leon E. Panetta, Director, Central Intelligence Agency; Robert S. Mueller III, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation; Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Jacob J. Lew; Richard C. Holbrooke, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command.